

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: 2300-003
SUBJECT: Authorized Telephone Calls of a Personal Nature During Official Travel	DATE: May 3, 1990	
	OPI: Office of Finance and Management	

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this regulation is to establish policy regarding authorized telephone calls of a personal nature during official travel. Included are calls on Government telephone systems, Government credit cards, commercial systems which will be paid for by the Government, and calls paid for by the employee for which reimbursement will be claimed on an AD-616, Travel Voucher.

2 BACKGROUND AND REFERENCES

a Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 735.205, which provides policy on the direct and/or indirect use of Government property of any kind.

b Title 41 CFR Parts 201-38 and 201-6.2 Federal Information Resources Management Regulation (FIRMR) Amendment 11, which clarifies the policy regarding authorized use of Government telephone systems to include calls over commercial systems.

c 43 Comptroller General 163, which establishes procedures for the certification and payment of long distance toll calls.

d Title 41 CFR (Federal Travel Regulations) Part 301-6.4, which allows use during official travel of Government telephone systems, including calls over commercial systems which will be reimbursed by the Government.

e Title 41 CFR (Federal Travel Regulations) Part 301-6.5, which provides that charges for official telephone calls on official business shall be allowed when properly substantiated.

f Title 41 CFR (Federal Travel Regulations) Part 301-11.3(c), which requires receipts for allowable cash expenditures in excess of \$25, except for long distance telephone messages when a coin box telephone is used and it is so stated in the travel voucher.

g Departmental Regulation 3310-1, "Use of Government Telephones, " which permits use of Government telephone systems, including calls over commercial systems which will be paid for by the Government, for official business and for calls necessary in the interest of the Government.

3 POLICY

a Authorized telephone calls of a personal nature during official travel. Long-distance telephone calls are authorized as being in the interest of the Government when an employee, traveling for more than 1 night, i.e., 2 or more nights, on Government business, makes a brief call to his or her residence, or to locations within the local duty station's immediate commuting area to speak to members of the immediate family, except as noted below. For the purpose of authorized telephone calls of a personal nature, immediate family includes spouse, minor children, and anyone sharing the same residence with the employee. The local duty station's immediate commuting area is defined as the area from which an employee regularly commutes.

(1) For purposes of this regulation, it is assumed that the purpose of the telephone call is to discuss household matters with the spouse, minor children, or anyone sharing the same residence.

(a) If dependent minor children or dependent family members physically unable to stay alone are moved to a location away from the official duty station's immediate commuting area, authorized telephone calls of a personal nature may be made to this alternate location.

(b) For those who do not have immediate family at the official duty station, a maximum of one telephone call per week is permitted to a nonfamily member within the employee's local duty station's immediate commuting area to notify him or her of the traveler's safe arrival at the temporary duty station and to check on the traveler's residence.

(c) When an employee and/or a spouse are traveling, for more than 1 night, away from the local duty station community area on a

househunting trip resulting from a permanent change of station, one telephone call of a personal nature to the local duty station commuting area for each night's lodging is authorized. When dependent minor children or dependent family members physically unable to stay alone are moved to a location away from the official duty station's immediate commuting area, authorized telephone calls of a personal nature may be made to this alternate location.

(d)

When an employee travels for more than 1 night from one official duty station to a newly assigned duty station and the immediate family members remain at the former station, one telephone call of a personal nature is authorized to the former duty station commuting area for each night's lodging.

(2) For purposes of this regulation, it is assumed that commercial telephone calls of a personal nature will be placed from a telephone coin box and receipts are considered not practically obtainable.

(3) Reimbursements for authorized phone calls of a personal nature made will be stated separately from calls made to conduct official business and claimed as a Miscellaneous Expense on the AD-616, Travel Voucher.

b Use of Commercial Services. When a Government telephone system, such as FTS, is not available or it is not convenient to place an authorized long-distance telephone call of a personal nature on a Government telephone system, a call may be made on a commercial system. A Government telephone is not considered available or its use convenient when time differences make the party called unavailable or when the party called cannot be reached during working or school hours.

Reimbursement for authorized telephone calls of a personal nature on a commercial system will be made under the following guidelines:

(1) Travel between points within the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

(a)

The maximum aggregated amount that may be approved for each travel period (i.e., consecutive days of official travel) cannot exceed an amount equal to \$5.00 multiplied by the number of lodging nights. The aggregated amount includes access charges and charges for calls not completed.

(b)

Claims will be allowed for calls placed to the local duty station commuting area on the day of return from official travel only for notification of a change in schedule.

(2) Travel points not located within the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

(a)

The maximum aggregated amount that may be approved for each travel period (i.e., consecutive days of official travel) cannot exceed an amount equal to \$7.00 multiplied by the number of lodging nights. The aggregated amount includes access charges and charges for calls not completed.

(b)

Claims will be allowed for calls placed to the local duty station commuting area on the day of return from official travel only for notification of a change in schedule.

(3) Only telephone calls of a personal nature made to the traveler's residence or to immediate family within the local duty station's immediate commuting area are authorized, except when (1) dependent minor children or dependent family members are moved to an alternate location away from the local duty station's immediate commuting area or (2) the traveler without immediate family at the official duty station makes a "safe arrival" call or call to check on the traveler's residence to a nonfamily member within the employee's immediate commuting area.

(4) In the event of a change in the traveler's return travel plans, a call may be placed, when immediate family is unavailable, to someone within the local duty station commuting area who will notify the immediate family of the change.

(c) Employee Responsibility.

(1) The employee must include a statement on the AD-616 that the calls were made in accordance with the regulations governing communication expenses incurred while on official travel.

(2) When submitting claims for reimbursement of telephone calls, the employee will be required to self-certify that the use of the Government telephone system was not practical and that commercial calls were made in accordance with Title 41 CFR Section 201-38.007-1(b). Approving officials will determine the form of the self-certification, e.g., written statement on AD-616.

d Approving Officer's Responsibility.

(1) Long-distance calls of a personal nature via commercial telephone must be certified as official business on the travel voucher by an official with delegated authority under Title 31 United States Code (31 U. S. C. 1348(b)) to certify telephone calls. Agency Heads are responsible for delegating the certification authority in their organizations.

(2) The agency approving official may request that the traveler provide the following information for each authorized telephone call of a personal nature, either orally or in writing: the date, the points between which service was rendered, the duration of the call, and the amount of the call.

The agency approving official may request that the traveler state, either orally or in writing, that the calls placed to locations other than the official duty station's immediate commuting area are authorized telephone calls of a personal nature under sections 3a(1) and (2) of this regulation.

(3) In emergency situations, the approving official may allow claims for reimbursement in excess of amounts stated in this regulation. A written itemization of telephone calls and related charges must be submitted to the approving official

accompanied by an explanation of the emergency requiring waiver of the aggregated limits permitted for an authorized telephone call of a personal nature.

4 INQUIRIES

Inquiries should be directed to the Office of Finance and Management at 382-1204.